

# Ecology in Chinese Medicine - Part One

by Leon Hammer

## Definition and Purpose

**H**uman ecology concerns the relationships between human beings and their natural and social environments. That relationship also concerns the internal environment of a person and the messages that emerge from that internal environment to inform itself of events therein that may concern its survival. We call these messages symptoms, and it is the thesis of this paper that from these messages we can learn not only the condition afflicting an individual, the aetiology of that affliction, but most importantly, the best way to intervene in the resolution of that affliction. Symptoms are our natural friends and our natural enemies are those who invent ways of eliminating them before we learn.

## Ecology as Universal

Ecology is a subject with which I have been consciously engaged on the most elevated and most banal plane for almost fifty years. The lesson that I learned about the interrelatedness and interdependence of all existing phenomena, living and dead, began in the town hall of the Springs Ladies Village Improvement Society [East Hampton NY] in 1961 where I met a bayman, a fisherman named Milt Miller, and an older blind farmer named Ferris Talmage. The subject was a Harbour, Accabonac, around which both men had been raised, a cornucopia of sea life that thrived during much of their lives and for thousands of years before, and where I had just bought a cottage and small house.

I did not know that eighty percent of the fish in the ocean spawn on these harbours, in the wetlands that border them. I was unaware of the relationship of these spawning fish to the nutrients provided by these wetlands and had unwarily already begun to fill my own with zoisha grass. I knew nothing of how the insects, the birds, the fish, the plankton all depended on each other for their life cycle and how only man could and was breaking that cycle and the richness of life in the harbour and others like around the world for only one purpose, profit. I did not know that the wetlands protected the mainland from hurricanes by absorbing the water and the force of the waves.

I dedicated my life to saving this harbour in its natural state and others like it for the next ten years in collaboration with a few, very few, others. We succeeded to save that harbour against very strong commercial interests, among other victories. Perhaps one of those victories was my awareness of the wisdom of nature generating both an awe and respect that has extended to my understanding and practice of Chinese medicine, and to this paper.

## Ecology in Chinese Medicine

### Introduction

All living organisms are engaged from birth to death in the endless process of healing deviations from normal physiology. Beginning with conception, our terrain is under constant stress, trauma and shock from which it must recover and return to homeostasis, balanced functioning.<sup>1</sup> That balance requires intricate and delicate self-healing manoeuvres that we will attempt to discuss and illustrate here.

We may ascribe this homeostasis to the intricate chemistry of living things that has evolved in the interest of survival over the last five billion years. Expressed in a literary rather than scientific style, we must begin with the recognition that a living organism is endowed with an involuntary consciousness of itself that is aware of thousands, or perhaps millions of simultaneous activities with the ability to recognize which of them are dangerous to survival and require instantaneous attention and action. It may be noted in passing that as far as we know, only the homosapien, through lifestyle choices intended, misguidedly, for survival, is able to interfere with these automatic mechanisms.

What we want to do here is pay homage to that process and see what we can learn from this remarkable self-healing organism that will inform our efforts to deal with the disharmonies that present themselves in our clinics. We want to do this with a humility and awe generally absent in the prevailing medicine both allopathic and sadly, often alternative medicine. For me this paper presents only the dawning of recognition of what there is to learn and how far I must go. Like all writing, this is an act of discovery.

## Symptoms

### 1. Identifying Conditions

Though apart from the central theme of this paper, the most immediate and obvious use of symptoms is to translate them into Chinese medical conditions. We can organize these conditions into those associated with the solid-hollow organs, the qi [True qi Deficiency], blood [deficiency and stagnation] and body fluid [Damp] and internal [psychological] and external pathogens [cold, heat etc.] classifications and into special areas such as retained pathogens [toxins, parasites], neoplastic and Qi Wild processes. From this organization we can assess and formulate the principal and secondary problems and determine our management strategies in terms of immediate and long-term interventions.

If the thrust of our medicine is to eliminate symptoms rather than see where they lead, we negate several thousand years of the most successful system of internal medicine ever conceived. Our heritage began with a book called appropriately "The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine", everywhere concerned with a deep inquiry into medical conditions and not the elimination of symptoms.

### 2. The Message Beyond Conditions

Endowed with consciousness we have mechanisms by which to be informed of these attempts at self-healing that we experience as symptoms. Symptoms inform our divinely endowed consciousness when self-healing does not work, when the stress, trauma and shock are beyond the ability of the organism to repair itself.

Every symptom is first of all a message that physiology has failed and that pathology has ensued. This seems to be where agreement among medical systems begins to part ways. Chinese medicine over the millennia has identified a symptom with a Chinese medical condition that we can manage and treat. Insomnia in which the person awakes after four hours of sleep and then returns to sleep relatively easily is a Heart Blood deficiency condition whereas if the person is unable to return to sleep the condition is Heart Blood stagnation.

If we use regurgitation [[GERD] as a model symptom, allopathic medicine will offer endoscopy to examine possible gross and microscopic evidence of alterations in the tissue where the stomach and oesophagus meet [inflammation, Barretts Oesophagus, dysplasia to cancer], and organisms thrive such as H. Pylori. This information is important and if the most serious of these possibilities is discovered, cancer, biomedicine has interventions including surgery, radiation and chemotherapy that can be life-saving.

For the less serious of the above listed pathologies medication [prilotic, antibiotics] is offered. Some patients, in acknowledgement of the psychological aspects of the symptom, will be offered anti-anxiety or anti-depressive medication. The object is usually to eradicate the symptom and the gross pathology rather than learn from it, and unfortunately many acupuncturists are of the same mindset.

Chinese medicine regards regurgitation [GERD] as a reversal of the normal flow of qi, food and phlegm downward through the gastro-intestinal system engaging in the process of the separation of the pure from the impure [Internal Duct of the Triple Burner-see below] and the absorption, transformation and transportation of vital substances to the blood and to every cell in the body. The reversal of this process downward and its reversal upwards is due to some form of stagnation, either of qi, food or phlegm or some combination of all three. All three must move. If not down, then up. The stagnation can be due an excess or deficient condition.

While all medicines agree that a symptom is a communication of disharmony or pathology and interventions according to accepted protocols the agreement ends here. What else can we learn from a symptom?

### 3. Aetiology of Disorder

#### a. Introduction

The identification and organization of Chinese medical conditions leads us to the aetiologies of these conditions and beyond to the identification of life-style practices [stresses] and constitutional conditions [basic terrain] and from there, as indicated above, to the individual roots of the person's being.

A comprehension of the aetiology or aetiologies of regurgitation is valuable beyond relieving the discomfort and/or the more serious associated conditions listed above. Learning the aetiology gives us an opportunity to interrupt the process that created the symptom and pathology. It is a tool for prevention.

Chinese medicine regards this symptom, our example of regurgitation, as one with many possible aetiologies, all of whom or a few may be operating simultaneously. The symptom cannot be treated successfully unless we consider the input of the liver (qi stagnation or deficiency), spleen qi deficiency and stomach qi-food stagnation, kidney yang deficiency (underlying spleen qi deficiency), triple-burner deficiency (internal duct function of separating the pure from the impure) and the lung's ability to descend the fluid it receives from the spleen, to say nothing of lifestyle issues.<sup>ii</sup> Let us examine each of these in turn as listed in terms of what we can learn about the aetiology.

## b. Organs

### i. The Liver<sup>iii</sup>

We will begin with the Liver, that is responsible for the direction, movement and containment [stagnation] of all qi. With regard to the gastro-intestinal system, Liver qi is essential for the movement of qi and food down known peristalsis. If Liver qi is stagnant either because of the need to repress emotions, or because Liver qi is so deficient, in either case the force necessary for the downward movement, for peristalsis is not available. The accumulating qi and food must move somewhere and if down is not an option it will move upward and we have the symptom-regurgitation.

At this point in our we could treat Liver Qi stagnation due to repression and Liver Qi stagnation due to deficiency with herbs and acupuncture and get temporary relief from regurgitation. However, the forces that impede or drain Liver qi are still operational and the problem will recur unless we address the causes of the impediment and/or the deficiency.

Liver qi stagnation is usually due to the repression of emotions, usually frustration that may lead to anger and impotent rage. Our work now requires us to inquire with the patient as to the nature of that frustration. Sometimes it is work or domestic situations about which the patient feels helpless to change. Frequently when I inquire as to what would a person change about their life if they could, the answer is that they wish they did not, in the words of one patient "always avoid judgment of a finished product by never finishing", and another "Afraid of not succeeding so did not try. Offered important positions and refused- could have been a millionaire by now". Here we are close to the individual root of a symptom that would seem endlessly far from that source, regurgitation, and closer to the ultimate solution. The root for this person was in her mother's alcoholism and early rejection of the maternal role, a Kidney Jing issue associated with fear of the unknown and lack of faith<sup>iv</sup>.

### ii. Spleen-Stomach Qi deficiency

It is the intention for the digestive system to move food down in the opposite direction of regurgitation. While it is said that the Stomach qi moves down, the Spleen qi moves up. This applies only to the 'tastes', the lightest and finest energies to each organ for its share of the functional qi from food, and to some fluid that goes to the lungs, and to maintaining the tissues that hold organs in place [prolapse]. Otherwise it and the Stomach move qi downwards through the process known as the Internal Duct, controlled by the Triple Burner where the pure is separated from the impure [a separate article alluded to slightly below].

The source of Spleen-Stomach qi deficiency is either Kidney Essence deficiency that begins anywhere from conception to infancy or from lifestyle that usually involves eating habits. Kidney Yang-Essence deficiency is discussed below.

Eating habits that cause Spleen-Stomach qi are similar to those causing Stomach heat except at a much later stage and over a much longer period of time. These include eating foods that are difficult to digest and beyond the initial strength of Spleen Qi, excess food under the same conditions, excessive amounts of fluids, consistent ingestion of very cold foods, eating irregularly, anorexia and bulimia.

Another less familiar aetiology is long-term over-thinking while eating. Eating for the Chinese is a sacred social occasion that requires focus on the food and the pleasant conversation that enhances the enjoyment thereof.

Also the Spleen serves the Heart for short-term memory such as occurs among students who cram for examinations and forget what they memorized immediately after the exam. Over the course of years of this practice, especially for those who go to college and graduate school, draining of Spleen qi, perhaps supplying the Heart with blood is considerable.

Another source of Spleen qi deficiency is the Leaky Gut syndrome associated with the use of antibiotics that have destroyed normal gastro-intestinal flora of which there around five hundred that are necessary to the complete digestion of food. The incomplete breakdown of protein into amino acids causes the absorption of short chain amino acids, incomplete proteins, recognized by the immune system as foreign bodies to which inflammatory responses ensue. This creates an environment in the gastro-intestinal system that promotes the growth of undesirable organisms and the attempt by the body to eliminate them through hyper-peristalsis, or diarrhoea through which Spleen Qi is depleted.

Taking a step back from these considerations there were Chinese medical stresses such as an inappropriate herbal or acupuncture intervention that could treat a deficient condition as if it were excess that could lead to the draining of Spleen Qi.

This is a discussion of aetiology and how symptoms can point us in that direction. However, I would like to add that water metabolism is very much a function of Spleen Qi. As I have mentioned elsewhere, the Spleen controls connective tissue. I mentioned above that excess fluid is a great stress on Spleen qi that must move it to the lungs [which descends it to the kidneys] as well as transporting to every cell in the body. When

it reaches its capacity to do this it treats the excess fluid as a retained pathogen and stores it in the connective tissue. A personal message from a colleague states,  
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“On the Yin side Spleen Qi is weakened and poorly transforms Food from the Earth (Damp), resulting in

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Damp condition pervading the body and inhibiting normal energy circulation and nourishment deposition. (e.g. precursors to ATP fail to arrive at mitochondria, the myofibrils are not provided with ATP in robust amounts and the routine depolarization of muscles cannot be reset on the cellular level and results in muscle spasm.)<sup>v</sup>

### iii. Kidney Yang-Essence deficiency

Kidney Yang-Essence deficiency is rooted in the exigencies of conception, through pregnancy and childbirth that are well discussed<sup>vi</sup> and documented. The exception to this documentation is conception where we find the age of the parents, the habits of the parents such as alcohol, drugs, nicotine and conditions such as cold and heat to be critical to the health of the offspring. In one instance when the patient's birth weight was two pounds, twelve ounces at six and one-half months, conception took place in a setting in which the parents were living in an unheated cabin during a long winter. Exposure to cold at conception was an issue strongly emphasized by my teacher; Dr. Shen.

Kidney Yang-Essence is the operational Fire that we associate with the Fire of Ming-men [Ministerial Fire] and thyroid function, the source of the Fire of other organs, especially Spleen and Lung Fire. Therefore a deficiency of Kidney Yang-Essence early in life from insults at conception, parturition, birth and early infancy will lead to Spleen-Stomach Qi-Yang deficiency.

### iv. Triple Burner

In another paper being currently written, I quote, “whereas the Heart is the Emperor the Triple Burner Runs the Empire”. In this context we are concerned with the Triple Burner as aetiology of our sample symptom, regurgitation.

As its name implies the Triple Burner is found in all three burners and exercises a measure of control in each. Overall this involves integration, balance and homeostasis of all of the body's functions. In the middle burner this involves the relationship between the Liver and Spleen-Stomach alluded to above in our discussion of the Liver. To the extent that this relationship tends towards imbalance, the Triple Burner functions to maintain balance, in the instance of regurgitation to maintain the Liver's function of moving qi down in the gastro-intestinal tract and to relieve whatever interpersonal conflicts that might be contributing to the loss of this function, repressed feeling and stagnation.

The middle burner is said to be located in the fundus of the Stomach and operates its function of controlling the

direction, balance and harmony of qi in the middle burner as well between the upper and lower burners. Here the points Zhong Zhu [SJ 3(most important)] and Zhong Wan [Ren 12] are most important to the digestive system and Yin Qiao [Ren 7] to all of the Triple Burners functions in the middle burner. Ye Men [SJ 2] is the central water point of the entire body that is so important to the Spleen's function of `digesting' water of which we are eighty percent. Serving the Spleen the Triple Burner draws heat from the Ming-Men to help it digest, to absorb, transform and transport food and water.

All of the above and the entire process of separating the pure from the impure of food and the proper distribution is a function of the Triple Burner's control of the Internal Duct. This includes the `concentrated essence' that form the `five tastes', the formation, storage and distribution of Wei Qi, of Jin-Ye and all fluids, the formation of blood and the excretion of what is the waste from this process.

Obviously the integrity of the Triple Burner in its service to the Spleen-Stomach qi in all of its functions and its homeostatic function in relationship to the Liver [middle burner harmony] is an ineluctable consideration in the aetiology and management of any Spleen-Stomach -Liver digestive dysfunction including regurgitation.

### v. Lung

The Spleen digests fluids that ascend to the Lungs that retain some for moisture and descend the rest to the Kidneys. The Lung's involvement in the aetiology of regurgitation is largely a function of the ability of Lung qi to descend fluids.

If the Lung fails to do this there is an accumulation of fluid in the Lungs that takes the form of phlegm. This surfeit of fluid in the Lungs inhibits the Spleen moving more fluids to the Lungs and they accumulate in the Stomach as phlegm stagnation that inhibits the flow of food and qi in its normal downward direction. Qi and food must move, and if they cannot move down they will move up, again, experienced as regurgitation.

## Discussion

We are discussing the importance of symptoms as a guide to aetiology. Without the resolution of these aetiologies, the symptoms will return with increasing intensity and frequency.

We described how each organ could contribute to the symptom regurgitation and again assert that an ultimate resolution of that symptom is rooted in the management and treatment of the involved aetiology or

aetiologies. [And remember again that most symptoms have more than one aetiology.]

## Symptoms as a Guide to Intervention

### Introduction

Even more important than leading us to the aetiology, a symptom can indicate a valuable therapeutic intervention that we could adopt in our own management strategy. A good example is the presenting symptom of diarrhoea.

Excess heat occurs when the body brings metabolic heat to overcome stagnation and fails. What was initially 'good' heat accumulates and becomes toxic, because even if it cannot overcome the stagnation it must keep trying. As mentioned before, excess heat is toxic to organs, and the body prefers to eliminate it through the bowels or urine. If the toxic heat exceeds the gastro-intestinal tract's normal elimination capacity, a more active discharge of toxic heat by hyper-peristalsis or diarrhoea may ensue. Normal faeces change to loose, often with mucous in the stool and sensations of heat in the anus.

Nature's principal mechanism for releasing accumulating excess toxic heat, diarrhoea, is crucial considering the alternatives. They include absorption of toxic heat into the blood where it creates inflammation, atherosclerosis and hypertension. From the blood they can be excreted through the skin as rashes or fibromyalgia [inflammation of nerve endings], through the divergent channels to joints and painful debilitating arthritis, or intractable constipation and the consequences of the toxic heat rising to cause severe headaches. As an irritant to tissues the body brings fluid to balance the heat. This combination of damaged tissue and fluid creates an ideal culture medium for infection. Treating the infection and killing bacteria does not reduce the original toxic heat or address its origin and may drive it deeper into the organism.

If nature prefers diarrhoea as a safer route for the discharge of toxic heat we must consider this as our own controlled therapeutic intervention, discussed below.

### Aetiologies of Excess Toxic Heat

#### i. From Excess Conditions

##### 1). Extrinsic

External causes such as working in a very hot unventilated environment [restaurant kitchens], summer heat, are easily identified. Less obvious are radiation [EMF], medications and other environmental toxins.

While at one time the sources of excess toxic were relatively few and straightforward, advances in biomedicine have created a series of stresses inconceivable prior to the modern era. For example, the syndrome Leaky Gut is associated with the use of antibiotics that have destroyed normal gastro-intestinal flora of which there are around five hundred that are necessary to the complete digestion of food. The incomplete breakdown of protein into amino acids causes the absorption of short chain amino acids, incomplete proteins, recognized by the immune system as foreign bodies to which inflammatory responses ensue. This creates an environment in the gastro-intestinal system that promotes the growth of undesirable organisms [perhaps *H. Pylori*] and the attempt by the body to eliminate them through hyper-peristalsis, or diarrhoea.

An accumulation of toxins from ubiquitous sources including EMF radiation<sup>vii</sup> more recently has been noted to be accelerating in the past fifteen years with apparent difficulty in elimination and increasingly diverted to joint, muscles, blood and fascia as retained pathogens. The attempt to remove these environmental toxins from the body is endless, requiring metabolic heat to perform what seems futile, thereby accumulating even more heat that then becomes excess and toxic. Some of the other causes of 'heat in the blood' could be medications, other heat creating drugs of abuse [cocaine, amphetamines].

Taking a step back from these contemporary causes, there were Chinese medical stresses such as an inappropriate herbal or acupuncture intervention that would treat a deficient condition as if it were an excess condition. This could lead to diarrhoea simply because of herbs that induce peristalsis or just the body wanting to eliminate them as quickly as possible. And of course, where diarrhoea is concerned, we must consider parasites [in the West, the most under-appreciated aetiology of many symptoms], celiac disease [sprue], etc.

#### 2). Intrinsic

However, more importantly there always have been situations related to the interplay of stress and terrain<sup>viii</sup> that could account for the symptom of diarrhoea. Let us consider these.

##### a). Excess Heat from Excess Conditions

##### i). Repressed Emotion

Probably the most common contributions to excess heat in modern times, as mentioned above, are repressed emotions and an overworked digestive system. Repression is a function of the Liver's ability to contain or stagnate, Liver qi stagnation<sup>ix</sup>. This sets

off a process involving the Liver mobilizing metabolic heat to move the stagnation. If it does not succeed, the heat will become toxic, and the Liver must remove it.

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Since the Liver stores the blood it will usually move the toxic heat there as a retained pathogen and then

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become a pathogenic entity in itself, usually over time raising blood pressure.

#### b). Digestive System

An almost equally common cause of excess toxic heat emanates from what is to begin, with is a constitutionally sound digestive system adequately supported by Kidney Yang-Essence. Why, under these favourable conditions, is there excess heat in the Stomach-Intestines?

Is it because the food is indigestible and therefore like a car that overworks and overheats, the Stomach is overworking, trying to do the impossible and like the car, and overheating? Is this because the person cannot afford easily digestible food, or does not know enough about nutrition, or is emotionally driven to eat anything to assuage their hunger for other things like love? Or, is the food good but the amounts, for similar reasons beyond the Stomach's ability to digest it adequately?

Or does the person eat too rapidly? Do they do this because of Heart qi Agitation, or because they work in an industry where little time is afforded for lunch, or where they are driven by their own ambition to set aside pleasure for gain and eat irregularly? Or is the food too spicy? Or has the person been eating very cold foods that have created stagnation in the Stomach-Intestines and the body has brought metabolic heat to the area to overcome the stagnation.

#### c). Lesson Learned from Nature

Excess heat in any organ is potentially toxic to that organ and survival dictates that it be eliminated. If it cannot be eliminated it becomes a latent or lurking<sup>x</sup> retained pathogen, channelled through divergent vessels to areas of the body such as joints that ultimately becomes arthritis, painful, but not as deadly as if the heat remained in the organ.

From the early days of my practice to about fifteen years ago the majority of my patients would be considered more excess than deficient. I began early in my career to realize that most patients who presented with diarrhoea had a great deal of excess heat not only in their gastro-intestinal systems and gallbladder but in their other organs, especially Liver, and in the blood [often with hypertension]. I also came to appreciate that the diarrhoea was the body's way of eliminating this heat, and under controlled conditions I could use this knowledge to do the same in patients with excess heat that they could not eliminate.

Therefore, after eliminating other causes of diarrhoea [parasites, Leaky Gut, sprue etc. and] using this learned wisdom, one of the first interventions was to help the patient eliminate their systemic excess heat [always

some from the gastro-intestinal system] and so I advised them to expect loose stools for the first few weeks of our work together. Of course, changes in lifestyle eating habits was routinely discussed, but these changes, however valuable, could not change the damage already done except over a long period of time.

As mentioned just above, much of this excess heat that benefited from this approach was also in other organs, especially the Liver-Gallbladder, and even the blood. Some of it was being excreted through the skin in the form of a rash that was relieved with the onset of loose stools.

This strategy that worked, in the service of eliminating toxic excess heat dangerous to the organs, most immediately the digestive system, was the same process that was directed by the body's 'inner intelligence' using diarrhoea. The body prefers to eliminate toxins by moving them down and out of the body through the faeces or urine.

#### ii. Excess Heat from Deficient Conditions

a). Excess Heat from deficiency occurs when the energy of the organ is not sufficient to overcome even modest stagnation. The excess heat from deficient conditions will usually be less and will occur sooner than with an excess person simply as a result of the inability of the deficient person to maintain an excess lifestyle for very long.

Before we consider lifestyle again, we must consider that an inefficient digestive process due to Spleen-Stomach qi deficiency can lead to the same overwork scenario described above due to the accumulation of incompletely digested food and of the metabolic heat brought to move it.

We must also keep in mind that deficient conditions often present with diarrhoea, mucous and undigested food simply because Spleen Qi is not sufficient to digest food and fluid efficiently and the fluid is excreted rather than absorbed. At the same time the excess heat creates inflammation in the digestive tract and fluid is drawn here to balance the heat leading to loose stools. Nature is less likely to remove the excess heat through diarrhoea since that would deplete the deficient person even more.

The lifestyle aetiology of excess heat associated with deficient organ conditions is not significantly different from the causes for excess heat in excess people.

I repeat some of the aetiologies associated with the Spleen-Stomach and Liver and refer you to [II, B, 2] above for a more complete discussion.

Since Liver Qi is responsible for moving the qi throughout the body, especially peristalsis, either Liver Qi stagnation [repressed emotion] or more often in our time, Liver Qi deficiency<sup>xi</sup> [marijuana, LSD] will

inhibit the downward movement of qi. A hyper-vigilant 'Nervous System Tense' patient overwork the Liver

could lead to the same result. Perhaps the patient suffered from anorexia or bulimia, the first of which creates Spleen qi deficiency due to inadequate nutrition, and the latter that drains Spleen-Stomach qi by repeatedly going against the normal flow of that qi.

Paradoxically, deficient people are often at less risk because they experience uncomfortable symptoms early in the process and either seek help and advice or make lifestyle adjustments on their own. This is how nature operates to resolve most conditions that are associated with deficiency.

I follow nature by supporting the Spleen-Kidney Qi-Yang system, controlling the diarrhoea to avoid dehydration and by adjusting life-style eating habits rather than on removing the excess toxic heat. The presenting symptom of diarrhoea is evidence that nature has already attended to this. By supporting the Spleen-Kidney Qi-Yang system, we are assisting nature to overcome the stagnation of qi, food and phlegm from deficient conditions that created the toxic heat. [Diet-food diary; type, amount, regularity, style (slow-fast)].

### c. Discussion

The thesis of this section is the use of a symptom as a guide to our own therapeutic intervention. In this context we have discussed diarrhoea in both excess and deficient people. Symptoms are not an enemy; symptoms are a friend. If nature is the teacher, symptoms are their lesson. Learn.

### 5. Symptoms as a Sign of Recovery

A patient presented with symptoms of awakening in the morning feeling as if he were in a coma, "like being stoned on pot and going to pass out" that lasted all day though gradually get better towards the end of the day. Nothing made it better or worse.

Signs, especially the pulse, pointed to two types of toxicity, one was radiation and the other chemical. The radiation is explained by extensive x-rays to his body over the years for the purpose of exploring other disorders, and the latter his job as a painter and wallpaper hanger. Another retained pathogen appeared to be gonorrhoea.

As already frequently mentioned, the body is constantly attempting to discharge these toxins some of which are stored in non-life-threatening parts of the person [joints]. When capable, during periods when the terrain is stronger, these toxins are released into the blood and attempts are made to excrete them through the bowels, urine and skin. During this period the

patient will experience symptoms due to the circulating toxins. If the detoxifying mechanisms are working the symptoms will pass quickly, but as with the above patient with an extensive history of marijuana use with signs of very deficient Liver qi, the toxins may circulate longer and never get excreted completely.

Rather than focus on relieving his 'coma-like' symptoms with damp reducing Spleen enhancing herbs or other strategies, we have a golden opportunity to assist the patient with detoxifying herbs and acupuncture to assist his natural functions. His symptoms may get worse for a short time since we are helping release the retained toxins which can be explained to the patient with whom we work closely. Otherwise the pathogens return to their diverted hiding places only to become lethal when the body becomes too weak to divert them and they are released to attack vital organs. Sudden unexplainable life-threatening illnesses can be the result of the failure to retain the pathogen that overwhelms the organism.

Our approach is to strengthen the terrain until it is strong enough to release the toxin, experience symptoms, and at that point assist the body to release it. This often happens a little at a time as part of a long-term plan intended to excrete the pathogen without overwhelming the patient.

<sup>i</sup> Hammer, Leon I. M.D.; Terrain, Stress, Root and Vulnerability;

<sup>ii</sup> Hammer, Leon I. M.D.; Chinese Medicine at the Crossroads; Acupuncture Today; June, 2008, Vol. 09, Issue 6, P. 2

<sup>iii</sup> Hammer, Leon I., M.D.; The Liver in Chinese Medicine; Medical Acupuncture

<sup>iv</sup> Hammer, Leon I. M.D. :Dragon Rises Red Bird Flies, Chapter Nine; Eastland Press, 2005, Chapter 8

<sup>v</sup> Lininger, Andrew; Personal Communication; 4/25/09

<sup>vi</sup> Hammer, Leon I., M.D.: The Paradox of the Unity and Duality of the Kidneys According to Chinese Medicine: Kidney Essence, Yin, Yang, Qi, the Mingmen- their Origins, Relationships, Functions and Manifestations' AJA Vol. 17, No. 3 & 4; 1999

<sup>vii</sup> Ross Rosen, L.Ac., Hammer, Leon I.; The Pulse, The Electronic Age and Radiation: Early Detection; The American Acupuncturist; Spring 2009, Vol 47

<sup>viii</sup> Hammer, Leon I. M.D.; Terrain, Stress, Root-Vulnerability; 2009 Unpublished

<sup>ix</sup> Hammer, Leon I. M.D.; The Liver in Chinese Medicine; Medical Acupuncture, Sept 2009, Vol. 21 #3

<sup>x</sup> Liu, Guohui: Warm Disease-A Clinical Guide; Eastland Press; 2001

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